



Food Assistance

(Food Stamps)

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Purpose

The food assistance program (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) provides nutrition to low-income Iowans and also benefits retail and agricultural economies.

Who

An average of 113,450 households per month received food assistance in SFY08, a 6.4 percent increase compared to the previous year. In June 2008, 256,812 people received benefits, a 6.6 percent increase from June 2007. Of the households, an average of:

- 32,561 received food assistance but no other state benefit.
- 80,889 received other government aid, mostly Medicaid. Some received Family Investment Program (welfare) benefits. See separate summaries on these topics.

What

- The average household benefit was \$213 a month in SFY 08.
- Eligibility and benefits are based on federal rules that consider size of household, number of people eating together, income, resources, household expenses, child care expenses, child support payments, and other variables.
- Benefits are funded 100 percent with federal dollars. The cost of administering the program is shared 50-50 with states.

How are We Doing?

- Among more recent service improvements, the department ended the burdensome monthly income-reporting requirement and replaced it with semi-annual reporting (January 2004), simplified the application (June 2004), added a customer call center (February 2005), used wireless technology to provide access at farmers markets (May 2005), implemented local outreach efforts (March 2006), added an online application that can be submitted by computer at www.yesfood.iowa.gov (May 2007), and added a standard medical deduction as an option for elderly or disabled households (October 2007).
- Over \$289 million in federal food assistance funds were brought into the Iowa economy in SFY08, a 10.9 percent one-year increase. The USDA estimates that \$5 in food assistance generates \$9.20 in local and state economic activity.

